which incorporates the majority of issues of concern to the developing countries. Besides several bilateral and some select group country meetings were held on the side lines of the UNCTAD meetings at Bangkok to garner their support for Indian stand on various issues at WTO.

Threat to Self-Sufficiency in Food

1845. SHRI E. BALANANDAN: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that the hard earned self sufficiency in food is now threatened in view of withdrawing the quantitative restrictions on trade and subsequent unrestricted dumping of cheap foodgrains by the developed countries in the Indian market; and

(b) if so, the steps Government propose to take in this situation?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY SHRI MURASOLI MARAN): (a) and (b) The phased removal of quantitative restrictions as are being maintained by Indian under Balance of Payment (BoP) grounds, including on some agricultural products has to be effected by 1.4.2001 in order to implement the rulings and recommendations of the Dispute Settlement Body (DSB) of the World Trade Organisation, which held that India was no longer justified in maintaining quantitative restrictions on imports on balance of payment grounds. However, adequate protection to the interests of farmers can be provided through appropriate adjustments in tariffs. Besides, necessary trade protection measures such as imposition of anti-dumping duties, safeguard actions or antisubsidy countervailing actions can be taken under specified circumstances. India has also been highlighting its concerns regarding food security and rural employment in the context of mandated negotiations under WTO Agreement on Agriculture.

Export of Marine Products from Kerala

1846. SHRI E. BALANANDAN: Will the Minister of COM MERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Marine Products Export Development Authority (MPEDA) has extended its activities to Kerala; and

(b) if so, the contribution made by MPEDA to increase the exports of marine products from the State?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI MURASOLI MARAN): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) As per the Marine Products Export Development Authority (MPEDA) Act 1972, MPEDA is responsible for the development of the marine products industry with special reference to exports. The various initiatives taken include schemes implemented by MPEDA for increasing the exports of marine products from Kerala include, *inter-alia*, participating in the share capital of six companies in project related activities of processing, aquaculture and deep sea fishing; assisting installation of equipment on mechanised vessels for diversified fishing; setting up jointly with the Kerala Industrial Infrastructural Development Corporation (KINFRA) a holding company to promote a pre-processing infrastructure project at Aroor; extending Grant-in-aid for procurement of seafood processing machinery; extend subsidy for establishment of shrimp hatcheries and new shrimp farms; rendering technical assistance to shrimp farmers; promoting fresh water prawn culture in low lying areas; organising training cum extension cum demonstration programmes for the benefit of fisher men, pre-processing and processing workers etc. and implementation of various schemes for quality upgradation and modernising the seafood industry.

Production of natural rubber

1847. SHRIMATI BASANTI SARMA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AEND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) the details of production of natural rubber in the country, particulafly in the NER at present;

(b) whether the production of natural rubber is much less than the demand of the country;

(c) if so the reasons therefor; and

(d) the steps proposed to be taken by Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI MURASOLI MARAN): (a) The detials of production of Natural Rubber in the country